such a vast magnitude the possibility of pilferage and diversion at the FPS and other levels cannot be ruled out. Complaints received are forwarded to the concerned State Governments/UTs for investigation and appropriate action. On investigation, where the complaints are substantiated, the State Government take suitable action under the law.

With a view to maintaining supplies, securing availability and distribution of essential commodities under the Public Distribution System, the PDS (Control) Order 2001 has been notified on 31.8.2001 under Section 3 of Essential Commodities Act, 1955.

Revamping of the Existing PDS

945. SHRI R.P. GOENKA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a proposal has been formulated to revamp the existing Public Distribution System to ensure fair distribution of food supplies to the targeted consumers;

(b) if so, the details thereof, especially the pattren to monitoring mechanism outlines for effective functioning of the PDS;

(c) whether it is a fact that some new programmes for consumers have been drawn up for implementation through the "Welfare Councils" to make the consumers aware of their rights; and

(d) if so, the details thereof with their present status?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI U.V. KRISHNAM RAJU): (a) and (b), Several steps have been initiated by the Government to strengthen the Public Distribution System. These steps *inter-alia* include promulgation of PDS (Control) Order, constitution of Task Force, implementation of Antyodaya Anna Yojana, enhancing the scale of issue for the BPL families from 25 kg to 35 kg per family per month. As per PDS (Control) Order the State Governments shall ensure a proper system of monitoring of fair price shops (FPS), regular inspection of FPS at least once in six months, holding of regular meetings of Vigilance Committee at State, District, Block and FPS levels and report periodically on utilisation of foodgrains allocated to them. They are also required to make arrangement

for distribution of PDS commodities in a transparent and accountable manner by involving PRIs in rural areas and local bodies in urban areas.

The Government has also constituted a Task Force for checking irregularities brought to the notice of the Government and also for general inspection/monitoring of the implementation of TPDS and Antyodaya Anna Yojana in identified areas.

(c) and (d) There is no programme for consumers implemented through 'Welfare Council'. However, the Government provides financial assistance to establish one District Consumer Information Centre (DCIC) in each district of the country. The Centre may be set up either by Zila Parishad or Voluntary Consumer Organization (VCO) recommended by the concerned State Government/UT Administration. Under this Scheme, financial assistance of Rs. 5.00 lakhs is provided over a period of 3 years for setting up of DCIC to make consumers aware of their rights. So far, 34 DCICs in 18 States have been provided financial assistance from Consumer Welfare Fund.

PM's participation in Next SAARC Summit

946. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Hon'ble Prime Minister would be going to Pakistan to participate in SAARC Summit early next year;

(b) if so, what pre-emptive diplomatic steps are being taken to desist Pakistan for raking up the Kashmir issue;

(c) whether the question of gas pipeline through Pakistan for supply of Iranian gas to India is proposed to be raised in the meeting; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) The matter is under the Government of India's consideration.

(b) Under Article X of the SAARC Charter, bilateral and contentious issues are excluded from the deliberations of SAARC.